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TAGS: [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: SADRISTS READY TO TAKE IRAQ TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR ROBERT S. FORD FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In a December 11 meeting, Sadrist TNA member Nasser al Sadi of Sadr City told PolOff the Sadrists favor forming a government that includes the Sunni Arabs and Kurds. He said the Sadrists do not want UIA 555 to govern alone, and the Sadrists do not wish to dominate any particular ministry. He assured PolOff that the Sadrists have eschewed violence and will resist the occupation of Iraq solely by political means. Nasser continued, saying that the Sadrists are especially strong in southern Iraq. Muqtada al Sadr may even run for political office once Coalition Forces (CF) leave Iraq, according to Nasser. END SUMMARY.

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A More Perfect Union  
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12. (C) Nasser told PolOff that the main goal of the Sadrists was to form an inclusive government after the December 15 elections. He said the Sadrists do not want UIA 555 to control the government alone. In order for a government to be successful, it must include Kurds and Sunni Arabs. No group should oppress another group. All Iraqis must be equal under the law.

13. (C) Nasser went on to say that the Sadrists do not have ambitions to dominate any particular ministries in the next government. He said the jobs at the ministries should go to the most qualified Iraqis, regardless of political affiliation. Nasser does think, however, that the Sadrists have qualified people to serve as Minister of Housing and Public Works, Minister of Trade, and Minister of Education. Sadrists do not officially desire to take over the Ministry of Defense or Ministry of Interior, but, if they did, Iraq would be safer, he promised. While promising that militias would not be used to target certain groups, Nasser pledged that with a security ministry the Sadrists would "take Iraq to a whole new level of security." (Comment: Given the experience in places like Najaf with Sadrist 'sharia' courts and the Mahdi militia, the Sadrists very likely would indeed take Iraq to a new level of quote security unquote. End Comment.)

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Giving Peace a Chance  
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14. (C) According to Nasser, fighting MNF-I twice has taught the Sadrists that violence is not the way to achieve their goals. Jaysh al Mahdi (JAM) will not fight MNF-I again. Muqtada al Sadr has decided to resist the occupation of Iraq solely by political means.

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Playing To Their Base, and Looking To the Future  
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15. (C) Nasser said the Sadrists are campaigning mainly in southern Iraqi cities such as Maysan, Nasiriyah, Basrah, and Kut. These areas in the Shia heartland are where the Sadrists are strongest. The Sadrist candidates, Nasser claimed, do not have a lot of money, and so have had to rely on imams to urge people to vote for them. While not openly endorsing candidates himself, Nasser said Muqtada al Sadr wants his followers to vote for "those who were oppressed by the former regime." Nasser also added that it is possible, once CF leaves Iraq that Muqtada will run for public office.

16. (C) COMMENT: Nasser is one of the few Sadrists with whom we can speak; many refuse to have anything to do with Embassy personnel. Those that do are careful to make the conversations very short, and they refuse to talk to Embassy female poloffs. By contrast, Nasser seems sincere in his moderate opinions; he directs a Sadrist cultural NGO on top of his TNA duties. He also definitely knows what we want to hear. While he is not in the inner circle around Muqtada, he is young and could be on the political scene for a long time. His comments point to the Sadrists' desire to be seen as serious politicians. The enthusiasm

with which Nasser spoke about possibly taking over a security ministry, however, makes his claims sound somewhat disingenuous. Many here have doubts that Muqtada and all his aides have completely bought in to the democratic process. We are watching for indications about whether or not he is going through the democratic motions only while it is convenient for him and his movement to do so. END COMMENT.  
KHALILZAD